

It is easier to build up a child than it is to repair an adult...Choose your words wisely.

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# Therakids

## ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EDUCATORS AND PLANTING THE SEEDS OF CLASSROOM WELLNESS.

### Hand Dominance

Hand dominance is described as the preference of one hand to perform fine and gross motor tasks such as writing, cutting, eating utensils or catching/throwing a ball. A non-dominant hand plays a significant role in completing a task and is called the “helper” hand. The “helper” hand needs to hold the paper still while the dominant hand writes. It also manipulates the paper as the preferred hand cuts with scissors. Both hands need to work together for bilateral coordination and other related tasks. Hand dominance usually starts to emerge between the ages of 2 and 4 years, typically completed by the age of 6. Although, in some children it may not become well integrated until 8 or 9 years. It is important for children to have a designated dominant hand and designated “helper” hand. If both hands attempt to do the same job, weakness and incoordination may occur. These children may also struggle with crossing their midline and may switch hands while writing across the paper. They may have an immature grasp and difficulty with cutting skills. Fine motor skills may be under developed. Children may struggle with higher level bilateral coordination tasks such as, dressing or ball skills.

#### Suggested websites:

<http://www.ot-mom-learning-activities.com/hand-dominance.html>

<http://make-the-grade-ot.com/Activities%20to%20Encourage%20Hand%20Dominance.pdf>

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=ambidexterity-and-adhd>

#### Activities to Encourage Hand Dominance

- Screwing lids on/off jars, assembling nuts and bolts. Hide small objects or stickers in containers for “discovery”.
- Large legos or other building toys. One hand must hold while the other hand manipulates the pieces into position.
- Pushing a car or train on a track. As they push the car with the dominant hand, they will crawl, putting weight onto their non-dominant hand.
- Coloring small pieces of paper. One hand will stabilize the paper while the other hand holds the crayon.
- Try rolling, catching, or tossing the ball into trash cans. This encourages both hands to work together.
- Zipping zip lock bags, lacing cards, tracing, and manipulating play-doh all encourage the dominant hand and the “helper” hand to work together.
- Stickers in a sticker book. Taking stickers off of the sheet can be very challenging.
- Use tongs, large tweezers, or clothespins to pick up objects. This will force a child to choose a hand.
- Toy workbench will work on manipulative skills.
- Scooping beans, salt, or noodles into a container.
- Pick-up games. Use pennies, buttons, beans that require use of a refined pincer grasp. Try putting these items into a small hole in a lid or container, similar to a coin bank.

The child should be using one hand in a more skilled manner while the other hand assists. Each hand should perform individual jobs within one task; one hand is the “worker” while the other is the “helper”. Do not let the child alternate hands. This will prevent hand control of a dominant hand. Avoid this by having the child continue to use the hand he/she initiates a task with throughout the task. Teach the child to rest the hand if needed. Encourage the child to do the above activities, which encourage a decision as to which hand to use according to the child’s development.

Therakids P.C. provides specialized occupational, physical and speech therapy services to help children overcome developmental concerns. Services are provided in the school setting throughout southwestern Illinois by licensed occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, physical therapists, physical

